

Understanding Advisory Roles in Large Scale Counterinsurgencies

**A Monograph
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Abstract

UNDERSTANDING ADVISORY ROLES IN LARGE SCALE COUNTERINSURGENCIES by LTC Patrick B. Roberson, United States Army, 56 pages.

For approximately the past ten years, the Army has been engaged in large-scale counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. These campaigns have forced the Army to reevaluate how it approaches its role in advising host nation forces. This reevaluation is evident in new doctrine addressing the Army's advising role and new organizational structures. The focus of much of this evolution has been on the Army's General Purpose Forces as compared to Special Operation Forces, which have intrinsically possessed the task of advising host nation forces.

This renewed interest in the Army's role in advising has produced new doctrine. However, this doctrine gives limited guidance regarding specific advisory roles and which type of force has responsibility for these roles: General Purpose Forces or Special Operations Forces. This monograph proposes an advisory framework, called the Advisory Triad, to better understand advisory roles in large-scale counterinsurgencies.

The Advisory Triad is composed of the following: The first leg of the triad is the Special Operations Advisory effort. This effort is US Special Operations Forces advising host nation SOF or equivalent force. The second leg of the Triad is the General Purpose Forces tactical effort. This effort is focused on advisory efforts at the tactical level, either assigned or supporting tactical commanders, usually division and below. These efforts take the form of military transition teams, mobile training teams, or efforts from the US that directly support training, advising and assisting of host nation tactical forces. The third leg in the Triad is the institutional advisory mission. This piece is usually accomplished by a security transition headquarters. Responsibilities include advising at the highest levels of the host nation military, advising on force structure, development, finance, education, and training. Additionally, this organization is responsible for synchronizing advisor efforts within the host nation.

Based on case studies of each advisory role in US involvement in Vietnam and Iraq; the Advisory Triad proves to be a valid framework. These case studies demonstrate the legitimacy of the Advisory Triad and highlights negative outcomes if advisory roles are not understood. This lack of understanding leads to advisory roles being ignored, neglected.

Finally, it is the contention of this paper that interest by the Army in advising is cyclic. This interest coincides with US involvement in large-scale counterinsurgencies. Concepts of advisory roles are generally forgotten after counterinsurgency campaigns and relearned, through discovery; at the beginning of the next large-scale counterinsurgency. This relearning phase can have disastrous results; therefore, understanding of advisory roles, through education and training, should be of paramount importance to the US Army.

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Introduction

Since September 11, 2001 and the beginning of the era of persistent conflict, considerable emphasis has been placed on the concept of building host nation capacity as a tenant to success in a counterinsurgency campaign.¹ The US military accomplishes this is by training, building and advising host nation (HN) forces. Currently, emphasis on the building of host nation capacity comes from many levels. President George Bush referenced US goals in Iraq in a statement “Our strategy can be summed up this way: we will stand down as the Iraqis stand up.”² One of the ways Iraqis will stand up is through US military capacity building efforts. The emphasis on building host nation capacity also comes from new doctrine as exemplified by the Army’s recently published Field Manual on Security Force Assistance. The 2010 National Security Strategy devotes an entire subchapter to the topic of “Investing in the Capacity of Strong and Capable Partners.”³ The US Government and US military believe host nation capacity building, based on training and advising, is a significant component to a successful counterinsurgency campaign. Thus, how does the US military accomplish this task in the most efficient and effective manner?

The effort to train and advise host nation forces or foreign security forces has traditionally been seen as the specific realm of US Army Special Forces (USSF) and of US Special Operations Forces (SOF) in general.⁴ However, since September 11th, the entire military has gravitated towards this line of operation. Evidence for this shift can be seen in the change in force structure of the Army, which created the Advise and Assist Brigade and the Military

¹Michael D. Jason, “Integrating the Advisory Effort in the Army: A Full-Spectrum Solution” *Military Review* (September-October 2008): 27

² President George W. Bush, speech delivered at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, 28 June 2005

³ *National Security Strategy*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, (May 2010): 26

⁴ Philip Battaglia and Curtis Taylor, “Security Force Assistance Operations: Defining the Advise and Assist Brigade” *Military Review* (July-August 2010): 2

Transition Team. Both of these concepts are significant steps towards adapting to counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, which require the capability to build host nation capacity.

Throughout history the entire military has conducted train and advise missions, however they have lost touch with past.⁵ The army especially has had a rich and deep experience with advisory missions during insurgencies in the Greek Civil War, the Korean War, and Vietnam to name a few. Even with this deep history, the Army tends to treat advising as a fad, something that will pass.⁶ Therefore, no permanent institutions are devoted to the concept and not enough deep thought is given to the subject. Even though it seems that the army treats advising as a fad, it surprisingly reasserts itself as something that is key and enduring.⁷

There is an ongoing discourse as to how the military should respond to the challenges of advising host nation forces writ large. Many of these ideas revolve around how Special Forces conduct advising missions and what the conventional military can learn from these endeavors. There are voices in this discussion which claim that SOF should conduct all advising in a counterinsurgency.⁸ Other voices espouse the idea that General Purpose Forces, conventional or non-SOF, can conduct the same advisory missions as SOF, therefore making them interchangeable. It is the purpose of this paper to provide a framework for this discourse and to advocate for the best way to employ SOF and General Purpose Forces in advisory roles in large-scale counterinsurgency campaign.

This paper will make three arguments: first, there are optimal advisor roles taken by SOF and GPF in large-scale counterinsurgency campaigns, secondly, there are important reasons why

⁵ Jason, 28

⁶ David S. Pierce, "Training and Advising Foreign Militaries: We've Done This Before" (Master's Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth 2010), 43-44

⁷ Brennan Cook, "Improving Security Force Assistance Capability in the Army's Advise and Assist Brigade" (Master's Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth 2011), 56

⁸ Jason, 27

these forces gravitate towards these roles and, third, it is critical that leaders and planners of all forces know and understand these advisory roles. This paper will analyze these roles by espousing a model called the Advisory Triad which works along three lines of operation:

1. SOF building capacity within Host Nation Special Forces or commando forces.
2. General Purpose Forces conducting tactical level advising, generally, at division and below.
3. A General Purpose Force security transition command with two fold responsibility: first, the conduct institutional level of advising, which encompasses advising the senior level of the host nation military on matters of strategy, force structure, military training and military education; secondly, this organization has a responsibility to synchronize advisor efforts within the host nation.

These three advisory roles are distinct, but they are also interconnected. Being aware of these roles is important because if roles are not known or understood a myriad of problems can ensue. If a role is not recognized as necessary or important, recovery can take years. The understanding of roles also prevents misuse of forces or their sub-utilization; this could have a negative impact on the outcome of a counterinsurgency campaign.⁹

This paper will explore the above stated dynamic regarding the advising roles of SOF and General Purpose Forces. In order to understand these advisory roles there are three areas that need to be considered: doctrine, practice, and recommendations. Chapter 1 addresses doctrine related to advising. The chapter will introduce Joint and Army doctrine related to advising. This portion will establish the vernacular and provide a look at current doctrine related to advising. In addition, the ambiguity involved with the different advisory roles that General Purpose Forces and SOF play in a large scale counterinsurgency campaign will be discussed. This ambiguity

⁹ United States General Accounting Office, Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Readiness, Committee on National Security, House of Representatives, "SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES Opportunities to Preclude Overuse and Misuse," (MAY 1997), 1-16

foreshadows Chapter 2, which deals with reality on the ground in a counterinsurgency campaign as it relates to different organizations' advisory roles. The case studies will outline how SOF and General Purpose Forces approach advising in these environments and will draw parallels that exist in both conflicts in regards to advising roles. The final chapter will address the validity of the advisory triad and recommendations for the future.

Review of the Doctrine

To best understand advisory roles it is helpful to look at doctrine as a starting point. Doctrine gives the military guidelines on how to operate. Due to the current conflicts and the intellectual struggle that has gone on with this topic, recently published doctrine, such as the Army's counterinsurgency manual, has been very relevant and strong. The operations section of US doctrine addresses the concept of advising in a counterinsurgency. Counterinsurgency is referenced in both the joint and service doctrine. Much of the doctrine speaks to SOF and General Purpose Forces integration with regard to advising, but the doctrine never specifies different mission sets or roles for each organization. On the contrary, one is left with the idea that SOF and General Purpose Forces generally carry out the same mission set. This concept will be expounded upon in the remainder of this chapter.¹⁰

Within this doctrine, advising in a counterinsurgency campaign is placed deep within multiple rubrics such as Security Force Assistance (SFA) for General Purpose Forces and Foreign Internal Defense (FID) for SOF. Both of these doctrinal concepts have advising host nation forces embedded within them. However, this concept is only a portion of what each of these terms encompasses. Further embedded within each of these concepts is advising in a counterinsurgency campaign that involves combat.

¹⁰ Doctrine contains essential principles that guide a military. Doctrine is normally codified in a series of manuals and books on different topics. These subjects give a military direction, focus and common framework of understanding.

Security Force Assistance (SFA)

SFA is the General Purpose Force doctrinal flagship for advising.¹¹ SFA is referenced in numerous doctrinal publications and according to Joint Publication (JP) 3-24 *Counterinsurgency*, Security Force Assistance is defined as:

Security forces comprise both civilian and military participants, to include law enforcement, border security, intelligence, special operations forces (SOF), and conventional military forces. Security forces can be at the regional level, such as United Nations (UN) forces, and all levels of the Host Nation from local to national. Many actors can participate in SFA, including joint, intergovernmental, interagency, multinational, nongovernmental, and others. These efforts focus on the Host Nation's efforts to increase its security forces' capability and capacity.¹²

The Army has developed an entire field manual devoted to the topic. Army Field Manual (FM) 3-07.1 *Security Force Assistance* defines SFA as follows:

Security force assistance is the unified action to generate, employ, and sustain local, host-nation or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority (FM 3-07). Security force assistance (SFA) improves the capability and capacity of host-nation or regional security organization's security forces. These forces are collectively referred to as foreign security forces¹³

Both definitions are recent, October 2009 and May 2009 respectively. The definitions are not exactly the same, but the meanings are very similar. The key point of these definitions is that Security Force Assistance is an all-encompassing concept. It is not limited to any type of conflict or security force.

¹¹ Martin Dempsey, comments on Small Wars Journal posted on may 5,2009, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/05/security-force-assistance/> (accessed January 30, 2011)

¹² United States Military, *Joint Publication 3-24, Counterinsurgency Operations*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 05 October 2009), I-10

¹³ United States Army, *Field Manual 3-07.1, Security Force Assistance*, May 2009, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, May 2009), 1-1

Foreign Internal Defense (FID)

Doctrinally, the Army's concept of the combat advisory mission in a counterinsurgency campaign is captured under SFA. In contrast, by legislative mandate, SOF conducts Foreign Internal Defense.¹⁴ Joint Publication 3-05 *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations* defines FID as follows:

Foreign internal defense is the participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.¹⁵

The following chart from JP 3-22 page 1-6 details the broad scope of the Foreign Internal Defense Framework.

¹⁴ United States Military, *Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 17 September 2006 Incorporating Change 1, 13 February 2008), VII-7

¹⁵ United States Military, *Joint Publication 3-05, Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 2003), II-7

Foreign Internal Defense Framework¹⁶



¹⁶ United States Military, *Joint Publication 3-22, Foreign Internal Defense*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, July 2010), I-6

SOF conducts the military components of FID, but General Purpose Forces can also take part. These components include assessment, training, advising, and assisting Host Nation military and paramilitary forces with tasks that require their unique capability.¹⁷ These Military components are further broken into three separate headings: Indirect Support, Direct Support, and Combat Operations.¹⁸

Indirect Support focuses on Host Nation self-sufficiency, it is a very limited and restrained approach aimed at improving a country's infrastructure. Indirect Support can include exchanges, joint or bilateral exercises with some or no US footprint. This approach can be conducted at any spectrum of conflict. A military exercise such as BRIGHT STAR conducted in Egypt would be an example of indirect support.

Direct Support does not involve combat operations but it does involve the US Military providing training and assistance to the host nation military or civilian forces. These operations include training support, logistical support, and intelligence sharing. They usually involve some type of US footprint in the Host Nation and involve countering an existing insurgency. A long-term training mission such as the one conducted in Columbia in the 1990s is an example.

FID Combat Operations involves US forces advising, mentoring, partnering, or augmenting host-nation forces in combat.¹⁹ The last of this trio of activities, FID Combat Operations, is the portion of FID that generally encompasses advising in a large scale counterinsurgency campaign. Recent examples would include the war in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. The chart below from JP 3-22 outlines the three levels of FID support.

¹⁷ *Joint Publication 3-05*, Doctrine for Joint Special Operations II-7,

¹⁸ *Joint Publication 3-22*, Foreign Internal Defense, 1-7

¹⁹ *Joint Publication 3-24*, Counterinsurgency Operations, I-9

Levels of FID Support²⁰



Although Special Operations Forces have been given the core tasks of conducting FID, it is not an exclusively SOF mission. As stated in JP-3-0 *Joint Operations* “While FID is a legislatively mandated core task of SOF, conventional forces also contain and employ organic capabilities to conduct limited FID.”²¹

The similarities within army doctrine between SFA and FID are striking. They are both generally considered part of a wider overarching plan in support of a Host Nations Internal Defense and Development strategy (IDAD). Both SFA and FID can be executed at all levels of

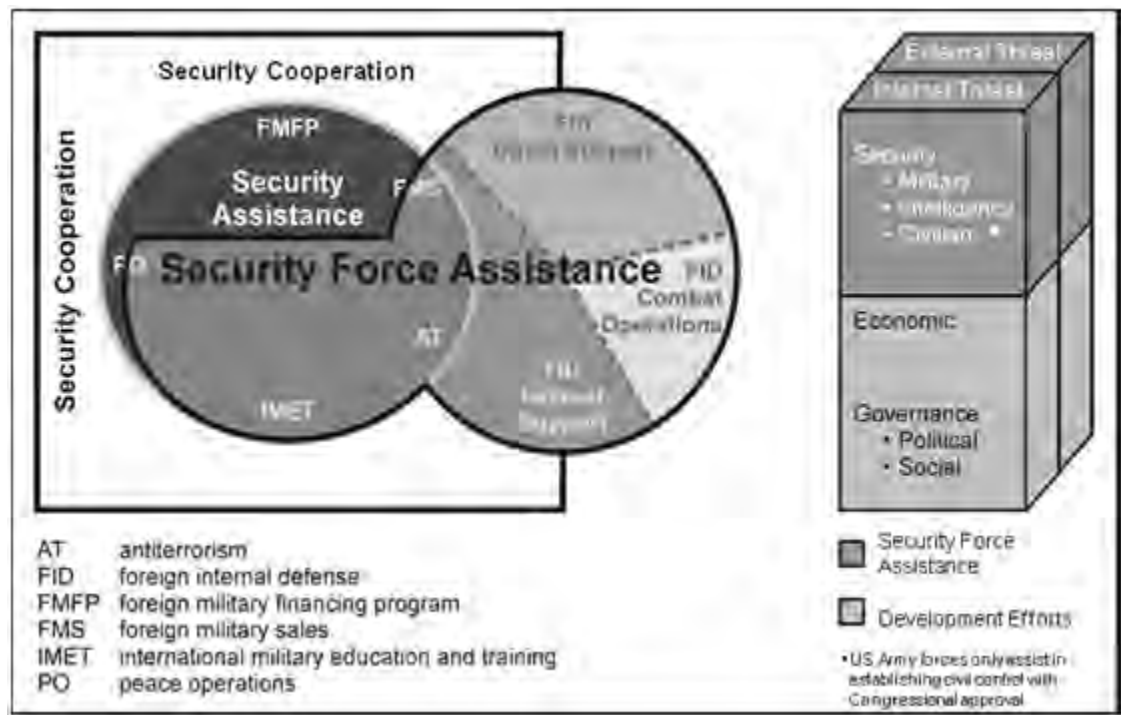
²⁰ *Joint Publication 3-22, Foreign Internal Defense*, I-8

²¹ *Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations*, VII-7

hostilities and include execution for both stable and failed states. Both are extremely broad in nature.²²

These similarities exist for good reason. According to the below chart from FM 3-07.1, FID is a subset of SFA. When advising host nation forces in a counterinsurgency environment, doctrinally defined as FID Combat Operations, there is no difference between General Purpose Forces and SOF mission sets.

Relationship of SFA with Security Cooperation, Security Assistance and FID²³



To further this point, SFA calls for integration with SOF while FID encourages integration with General Purpose Forces. FM 3-07.1 *Security Force Assistance* has this to say regarding SOF/General Purpose Forces integration:

²² Battaglia and Taylor, 3

²³ United States Army, *Field Manual 3-07.1, Security Force Assistance*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, May 2009), 1-7

Many criteria determine when conventional forces, special operations forces, or a combination are appropriate to conduct SFA. Both force levels and force characteristics suggest optimal, acceptable, and undesirable force package options in planning and resourcing SFA. Options for the deployment of a modular brigade augmented for SFA, a select number of conventional military transition teams, or special operations forces depend on conditions of the operational environment, priorities of the IDAD strategy, overall U.S. national policy, and forces available.²⁴

Integration of SOF and General Purpose Forces in a SFA/FID role can take on almost any form depending on the conditions. The doctrine does not lay out exact command relationships but it is evident that in some instances General Purpose Forces could be in charge of SOF or the reverse. Therefore, it is imperative that all sides know capabilities, limitations and all other issues effecting SOF/General Purpose Forces advisory roles.

Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Advisor Roles

Counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine is the other major branch of doctrine that references advising host nation forces. There are two main sources of doctrine covering this topic: JP 3-24 *Counterinsurgency Operations* and the Army's FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency*. Both include references to FID and SFA. JP 3-24 Counterinsurgency highlights the COIN/FID relationship:

FID may or may not include countering an insurgency. When FID includes countering an insurgency, counterinsurgency is part of FID. Counterinsurgency only refers to actions aimed at countering an insurgency whereas FID can aim at dealing with any one or a combination of subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. In most cases, the joint force conducts counterinsurgency as part of a larger FID program supporting the Host Nation government. Counterinsurgency that is not part of FID is an uncommon situation, and it should be a transitory situation where the US and any multinational partners should work to establish or reestablish Host Nation sovereignty.²⁵

JP 3-24 states the following about SFA:

²⁴ *Field Manual 3-07.1, Security Force Assistance*, 1-9

²⁵ *Joint Publication 3-24, Counterinsurgency Operations*, I-9

SFA and security forces are integral to successful FID, counterinsurgency, and stability operations. SFA includes organizing, training, equipping, rebuilding, and advising various components of security forces in support of a legitimate authority.²⁶

It is clear that the Army sees FID and SFA linked with counterinsurgency.

Counterinsurgency is a part of an overall FID or SFA effort. So, counterinsurgency doctrine identifies that FID and SFA are central to a counterinsurgency campaign.

To understand advisory roles in a counterinsurgency campaign one must look at the Army's FM 3-24. Chapter six is devoted to developing host nation security forces. It outlines important considerations such as culture, history, presence, or lack thereof, of a host nation security force. Chapter 6 also addresses responsibilities of General Purpose Forces and SOF in a counterinsurgency campaign. This manual begins to develop the idea that SOF conducts FID in a counterinsurgency environment and could be the sole responsible entity in that counterinsurgency environment; however, in a large-scale counterinsurgency campaign, SOF is too small to implement all advising missions and may be capable of working only with counterparts.²⁷ Chapter 6 also outlines requirements for a larger, separate command responsible for training security forces.

These ideas on SOF/General Purpose Forces roles are briefly touched on in doctrine, but within the counterinsurgency campaign, these ideas are critical to effective and efficient employment of forces. These concepts of responsibility are briefly addressed in FM 3-24 but, surprisingly, there is no chapter devoted to building host nation security forces in the JP-24.

FID and SFA can both be conducted simultaneously during full spectrum operations, although doctrine indicates that FID or SFA conducted during combat operations is the exception. This doctrine is recent, but the idea that FID or SFA conducted in a combat environment is the

²⁶ *Joint Publication 3-24, Counterinsurgency Operations*, 1-11

²⁷ United States Army, *Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 2006), 6-3-6-5

exception seems to be an anachronism based on the two counterinsurgencies being fought at the time of publication.²⁸

To summarize chapter 1, it is evident that FID is a broad activity legislatively mandated to SOF, which generally encompasses activities aimed at increasing a foreign government's ability to protect itself. FID consists of three parts: indirect, direct, and combat operations. SFA is an activity that General Purpose Forces have adopted. This activity incorporates most actions involving improving Foreign Security Forces. By Army doctrine, the majority of SFA is FID, for the purposes of this paper there is no difference. Both Joint and Army doctrine call for integration of SOF and General Purpose Forces in FID and SFA operations but no doctrine specifically outlines roles or responsibilities of either force in a counterinsurgency environment. The doctrine is ambiguous, it gives little direction on the roles and responsibilities for SOF and General Purpose Forces in the advisory function, therefore case studies will be used to explore what FID in a combat environment looks like.

The next chapter will look at case studies outlining SOF advisory roles in Vietnam and Iraq. The following section will examine the tactical advisor in Vietnam and Iraq followed by the final section in Chapter 2, which deals with the institutional advisor role in Vietnam, and Iraq.

Case Studies on Advisory Roles

There is more to combat advising roles and responsibilities than was described in the doctrine section; to understand one must look at history. For case studies, this paper examines US involvement in Vietnam and Iraq. These are two of the three large-scale counterinsurgency campaigns that simultaneously involve significant numbers of SOF and General Purpose Forces. Iraq and Vietnam also provide the opportunity to look at these operations over time and comprehend what concepts are enduring and what are short-term trends. Parallels in advisory

²⁸ Those counterinsurgency campaigns are being fought in Iraq and Afghanistan.

roles between SOF and General Purpose Forces over the courses of Vietnam and Iraq will become evident in the next several pages. Advisory roles and the Advisory Triad will be discussed first.

What are advisory roles? They can be framed in three domains – an Advisory Triad.²⁹ This Advisory Triad is a framework for looking at combat advisory efforts in large-scale counterinsurgencies. This triad allows for a more refined examination of which force is the more appropriate for certain roles.

The Advisory Triad is composed of the following: The first leg of the triad is the SOF advisory effort. This effort is US SOF advising host nation SOF or a host nation commando force. The second leg of the triad is the General Purpose Forces tactical effort. This effort is focused on advisory efforts at the tactical level, either assigned or supporting tactical commanders, usually division and below. These efforts take the form of military transition teams, mobile training teams, or efforts from the US that directly support training, advising and assisting of host nation tactical forces.³⁰ The third leg in the Triad is the institutional advisory mission. This piece is usually accomplished by a security transition headquarters. Responsibilities include advising at the highest levels of the host nation military on matters of force structure, development, finance, education, and training. Additionally, this organization is responsible for synchronizing advisor efforts within the host nation. The institutional advisory mission took the form of Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MACV) in Vietnam and Multi National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I) in Iraq. These three legs are the key to the US advisory formula for a large-scale counterinsurgency campaign. This framework is conditions-

²⁹ The idea of the advisory triad came from a blog post by General Martin E. Dempsey referencing the release of the Army's manual on Security Force Assistance. In the Article General Dempsey touched briefing touched on the idea of advisory roles and which forces should be responsible for them.

³⁰ Dempsey *Small Wars Journal* post

based and cannot be applied universally. It does apply to large-scale counterinsurgency efforts such as those in Iraq and Vietnam.

The concept of the Advisory Triad came from an article by General Martin Dempsey on the release of FM 3-07.1 *Security Force Assistance* in which he addresses General Purpose Forces, tactical advisors, and the standing joint task force (JTF) concept for institutional level security transition. However, he did not address the role of SOF in this type of a large-scale counterinsurgency.³¹

The SOF Advisor Role

Now that doctrine has been discussed and the Advisory Triad defined, case studies will be utilized to bring large-scale counterinsurgencies into focus. The remainder of this chapter will deal with case studies from Vietnam and Iraq using the Advisory Triad framework in the following sequence: SOF in Vietnam and Iraq; Tactical Advisors in Vietnam and Iraq; and Institutional Advisors in Vietnam and Iraq. The SOF advisory role is first.

SOF in Vietnam

The majority of the US SOF experience in Vietnam was related to building and advising host nation SOF and commando forces.³² The SOF effort in Vietnam did not immediately begin by working with host nation SOF or commandos. It was a gradual transition. The SOF mission in Vietnam began with the partnership of SOF with the CIA and the development of the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG).³³ This program began in 1961 and was funded by and under the control of the CIA but staffed and operated by SOF. Pacification was the main aim of the program, which established village presence in areas that were difficult for the Government of

³¹ Dempsey *Small Wars Journal* post

³² Jeffery J. Clarke, *U.S. Army in Vietnam, Advice and Support, The Final Years 1965-1973* (Washington D.C. Center of Military History United States Army 1987), 207

³³ Graham A. Cosmas, *MACV The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation 1962-1967*. (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 2005), 24-25

Vietnam (GVN) to control. The majority of these villages were in geographic areas where the population demographic was non-Vietnamese, meaning some type of ethnic minority, mostly ethnic Montagnard (an ethnic group straddling the Lao and Vietnamese border region).³⁴ The US SOF effort quickly focused on building local defense forces and local militias capable of local defense.

This program was quite successful, eventually drawing the attention of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV).³⁵ This occurred at a time when the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) was having difficulty dealing with the Vietcong insurgents and was in need of assistance.³⁶ This led to Operation SWITCH BACK, a shift that moved control of SOF conducting the CIDG program from the CIA to MACV. Shortly after this switch, the main SOF HQs element in Vietnam became subordinate to MACV.

This move initiated a major shift in SOF efforts in Vietnam, away from a population security strategy and towards an offensive strategy based on destruction of Vietcong and sealing South Vietnam's western border.³⁷ This was achieved through maintaining, recruiting and advising strike forces: company and battalion sized commando elements composed of ethnic minorities. Previously these CIDG forces would have been considered militia. After 1963, they were full time soldiers, closely advised by SOF.³⁸ Many of the CIDG Camps were transferred to Vietnamese control, but SOF still maintained select camps along strategic areas such as infiltration routes. These camps were populated by SOF and CIDG volunteers and were used as a

³⁴ Thomas K Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare* (London: Newbury House, 1998), 84-89

³⁵ Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: John's Hopkins University Press, 1986),71-73

³⁶ Krepinevich, 78

³⁷ Krepinevich, 73-75

³⁸ Douglas E Blaufarb, *Counterinsurgency era: US Doctrine 1950 to Present* (London: The Free Press,1977) 259

initiation point for strike forces and border surveillance. This line of operation was key for the remainder of the SOF's presence in Vietnam. The below chart illustrates SOF advised militia activities in 1963.

SOF Advised Militia Activities in 1963.³⁹

CIDG Hamlet Militia	37,918
Strike Force	14,645
Border Surveillance	2,376
Mountain Commando/Scouts	4,912

Considering that the Vietnamese Army active duty strength in 1963 was 219,000 men, the approximately 50,000-man paramilitary force fielded by SOF was an army unto itself.⁴⁰ It is understandable that MACV wanted to utilize that combat power for offensive operations. In 1962 MACV ordered that half the available CIDG Strike Forces would be focused on conducting offensive operations.⁴¹ This signified a dramatic change. In 1961 and 1962, SOF conducted the CIDG program to provide security to the population, after 1963 CIDG was the tool that provided manpower and basing for the conduct of partnered offensive operations.

Another line of operation for SOF in Vietnam was the partnership with South Vietnamese Special Forces (VNSF). This partnership was one of the most important missions for SOF in Vietnam.⁴² Vietnamese Special Forces worked with US SOF in the CIDG program by having the

³⁹ Christopher K. Ives, *US Special Forces and Counterinsurgency in Vietnam* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 101

⁴⁰ James L. Collins, *The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 1950-1972*. (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 1975), 29

⁴¹ Ives, 88

⁴² Francis J Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces 1961-1971* (Washington D.C. Department of the Army, 1973), 74

responsibility for specific villages or working under the advisement of US SOF in CIDG villages. This partnership provided more legitimacy for the government in Saigon because it was an organization from within the South Vietnamese military structure as opposed to a village militia. The Vietnamese SF generally comprised a portion of most CIDG strike forces.

Although a positive relationship existed between Vietnamese SF and US SOF, there were issues. Vietnamese SF were ethnic Vietnamese and there was friction between ethnic minority CIDG Forces and the Vietnamese SF. In addition, Vietnamese SF was populated with associates of the Saigon Government and lacked some of the desire to fight that was present within the CIDG strike forces.⁴³ This inability to significantly improve Vietnamese SF was one of the biggest shortcomings of US SOF during the war.⁴⁴

As the war progressed in Vietnam, SOF turned more and more towards offensive operations conducted with indigenous forces, generally morphing out of the CIDG program.⁴⁵ As these CIDG strike forces became more successful, more were desired. In 1965, under the direction of MACV, five new ethnic minority battalions were formed and called Mobile Strike Forces, or MIKE Forces. Each of these MIKE Forces was assigned to support one of the four Corps areas in Vietnam and the remaining MIKE Force stationed at SOF headquarters. These MIKE Force elements were the Corps' quick reaction force and were responsible for numerous other missions including reconnaissance, search and destroy, and reinforcing isolated CIDG camps. In 1966 another outgrowth of this mission was the Mobile Guerrilla Force. This program was based on building strike forces that could operate inside Vietcong sanctuaries in South Vietnam. Operation Blackjack 31 is an example of Mobile Guerrilla Force operation conducted in a Vietcong sanctuary titled War Zone D. This operation was organized by a Special Forces

⁴³ Adams, 122-123

⁴⁴ Clarke, 207

⁴⁵ Kelly, 49

detachment leading an ethnic minority company (Cambodians) with the intent of disrupting an enemy sanctuary.⁴⁶

A final example of SOF partner force operations in Vietnam was the mission given to SOF to conduct cross border operations into Laos and Cambodia in order to provide intelligence, disrupt enemy sanctuary and disrupt lines of communication. These missions were originally conducted by Vietnamese SF, but it was quickly determined that a partnered approach between US SOF, Vietnamese SF and CIDG forces would be a better option. These missions were extremely sensitive, normally involving helicopter insertion along the South Vietnamese border, a reconnaissance to locate enemy sanctuary followed by a large air strike to destroy enemy targets. These missions demonstrate the quality of the SOF advisory effort and the level to which a partnered force could affect the battlefield.

US Forces in Vietnam began to drawdown in 1969; SOF was part of this drawdown. The indigenous forces generated, such as CIDG Strike Forces and Mike Forces, were transitioned over to the South Vietnamese Army and reflagged as Ranger Companies. It is critical to look at the numbers to account for how many high-end forces were partnered with SOF in 1969.

SOF Partner Forces 1969⁴⁷

VNSF	3,878
Camp Strike Force	42,403
Mobile Strike Force	10,502
USA Special Forces	3,480

⁴⁶ James C Donahue, *Mobile Guerrilla Force: With Special Forces in War Zone D* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996),1-7

⁴⁷ Aaron, Harold R., *Senior Officer Debrief Program*, (Army Regulation 1-26, 30 June 1969), 2

In retrospect, this combat advisory role geared toward offensive operations is often seen by some authors, as something that was forced upon SOF by the MACV. To a certain extent that may be true. However, at its core, SOF, and specifically US Army Special Forces were designed to be an instrument of Unconventional Warfare (UW). Unconventional Warfare entails building an insurgent force to go on the offensive against a government.⁴⁸ In the CIDG evolution, SOF built a force tailored to local defense, which in time, evolved into an extremely effective offensive force. Once this force was assembled it did not take long for SOF to use it for offensive operations.⁴⁹ This trend for SOF to take host nation forces on the offensive reemerges in Iraq.

The assumption that SOF was a willing partner in this evolution is based on the absence of SOF commanders, at the time, speaking out against the strike force concept. Much to the opposite, SOF commanders were quite content with their role. Colonel Aaron, 5th Special Forces Group Commander 1968-1969, commented in his Senior Officer Debrief that “the current scope of USASF/VNSF operations is considerably larger than is often recognized”.⁵⁰

COL Aaron also brought out several other points regarding the role of SOF in combat advising. SOF advisors were more than just one-dimensional advisors. Depending on the mission and the capabilities of the indigenous leadership, SOF advisors often assumed the role of commanders. They were also responsible for salary, equipping, and other areas that enabled them to have great “influence and persuasion”. The relationship that SOF had with CIDG and Vietnamese SF is not unique to Vietnam. This form of advising is one of the key elements which made SOF unique and successful. The next case study, SOF in Iraq, displays similar characteristics.

SOF in Iraq

⁴⁸ Krepinevich, 66-75

⁴⁹ Kelly, 37

⁵⁰ Aaron, 2

The evolution of SOF in Iraq is similar to the evolution of SOF in Vietnam. Much like Vietnam, SOF did not begin in Iraq with a FID program, the original mission was unconventional warfare supporting an ethnic minority group attempting to assist the US military achieve regime change in Iraq.⁵¹ This charge evolved into a FID program supporting both Commando and Counter Terrorist Forces; later evolving further to support Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) units throughout Iraq. All of these relationships were geared towards building host nation capacity, in the form of SOF-like units, while simultaneously partnering and fighting with these units in a counterinsurgency campaign.

In early 2003, SOF efforts were focused on conducting an Unconventional Warfare mission supporting Kurdish forces in Northern Iraq. These efforts were carried out by 10th Special Forces Group. The 5th Special Forces Group located in southern Iraq was attempting to wage a similar campaign.⁵² These partnerships were successful on numerous fronts, especially in northern Iraq. The Kurds lived in a semiautonomous region, had a ready paramilitary force, and were willing to fight the regime in Iraq. Thousands of Kurdish forces, advised by US Special Forces, and already organized into military units, were an economy of force operation.⁵³ They fixed numerous Iraqi divisions around Kirkuk and Mosul, preventing them from reinforcing Baghdad. Although not doctrinally Foreign Internal Defense, this Unconventional Warfare operation was an opposite twin; the assembly of an insurgent force to remove a government as opposed to providing military assistance to a government in order to defend itself from an insurgency.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Michael Vickers, ASDSOLIC, interview with National Public Radio, March 24, 2003, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1286715&ps=rs> (accessed 17 November 2010)

⁵² Leigh Neville, *Special Operations Forces in Iraq*. (Oxford: Osprey, 2009) 5-7

⁵³ Neville, 11-12

⁵⁴ Isaac J. Peltier, "Surrogate Warfare: The Role of U.S. Army Special Forces", (Master's Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth 2005)10-12

By late 2003, SOF began to develop a Foreign Internal Defense line of operation. This SOF effort was represented by the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Arabian Peninsula (CJSOTF AP). This program first took the form of supporting the 36th Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) Battalion.⁵⁵ The 36th ICDC Battalion consisted of separate companies from each of the five main political bodies in Iraq at the time.⁵⁶ The 36th, advised and supported by SOF, went on to distinguish itself in the first battle of Fallujah. Later, the 36th ICDC was reflagged the 36th Commando and began conducting SOF partnered operations throughout Iraq.⁵⁷

Emerging almost simultaneously with the 36th Commando was the Iraqi Counterterrorist Force (ICTF). This element was also supported by SOF, and was designed to conduct counter terrorist missions including: hostage rescue, direct action and close target surveillance. Numerous high-end targets were killed or captured by the ICTF such as referenced in 2008 press release from Operation New Dawn: *Iraqi Counter Terrorist Force, US Special Forces kill seven Special Group Criminals in Bagdad*.⁵⁸ This title captures the essence of SOF's relationship with its partner forces in Iraq; a relationship that is more than just training and advising in order to build capacity. Similarly to Vietnam, SOF built host nation Forces in order to partner and engage with them in offensive operations.

⁵⁵ Donald P Wright and Timothy R Reese, *On Point II Transition to the New Campaign: The United States Army in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM May 2003-January 2005*. (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008) 430-431

⁵⁶ The five major political parties were: Iraqi National Accord (INA), Iraqi National Congress (INC), Kurdish Democratic Party(KDP), Patriotic Union of Kurdistan(PUK), and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI).

⁵⁷ Jeffery N. James, "Understanding Contemporary Foreign Internal Defense and Military Advisement: Not Just a Semantic Exercise", (Master's Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth 2008) 22-28

⁵⁸ Multi-National Corps – Iraq Public Affairs Officer, "Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Forces, U.S. Special Forces kill seven Special Groups criminals in Baghdad May 6, 2008" http://www.usf-iraq.com/?option=com_content&task=view&id=19101&Itemid=128 (accessed on 12 December 2010)

Due to their success and evolution as a force, in 2005 the 36th Commando and the ICTF were combined under one headquarters, supported by SOF, called the Iraqi Special Operations Force Brigade. The Brigade was directly partnered with SOF and conducted missions throughout Iraq.⁵⁹ This was a very critical distinction to make about the capabilities of this force early in the war. At a time when Iraqi security forces were still unstable, the Iraqi Special Operations Force Brigade could rapidly project power to almost any region in Iraq, including battles in Najaf, Fallujah, Basra, and Sadar City.⁶⁰ The contributions of this force were a factor in the success of the Iraqi government's fight against insurgents in several regions of the country.⁶¹

US SOF and Iraqi SOF had a unique resource relationship, similar to a sponsorship. As Iraqi SOF were being built, US SOF was responsible for much of their support, including salaries and equipping. Although Iraqi SOF had a command relationship with the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and later the Counter Terrorist Ministry, SOF held much influence over mission selection, personnel movements and other day-to-day activities.⁶²

The next phase in SOF's combat advisory role focused on regionally oriented forces. This effort was called the Iraqi SWAT or ISWAT program. While the Iraqi SOF program was military, the Iraqi SWAT was a paramilitary police program controlled by the Iraqi Minister of the Interior and the Provincial Governors. Many Iraqi provinces had Iraqi SWAT units supported by US SOF. The model for these Iraqi SWAT units was Hilla SWAT, a unit that achieved tremendous success in and around Hilla, south of Baghdad. The SWAT elements were usually supported by a 12 man Special Forces Detachment that lived with the Iraqi SWAT unit.

⁵⁹ March 2008 Report to Congress, *Measuring Security in Iraq* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, June 2008) 57-59

⁶⁰ Monte Morin, "Iraqi-Counterterror Unit Proves Its-mettle in Hostage Rescue" *Stars and Stripes*, 29 March 2011

⁶¹ Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iraqi Security Forces: A Strategy for Success* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2006) 189

⁶² Cordesman, 184

The development of the Iraqi SWAT program was an adaptation to an evolving counterinsurgency campaign. As the Government of Iraq was able to more effectively govern and the insurgency was weakened and became more of a police problem, the situation became clear to SOF. In order to keep the pressure on the insurgents, SOF needed to develop a force that had the authority and the capability to surgically operate within urban areas. SOF also needed a force with Iraqi political top cover with authority to conduct kinetic activities in an emerging democracy. Iraqi SWAT fit those requirements: local, more connected to provincial government and plugged into the Iraqi judicial and police system. The development of the Iraqi SWAT program did not diminish the need to partner with Iraqi SOF, which was still important. But it did demonstrate an evolution in SOF's advisory role in Iraq.⁶³

SOF shaped and built the Special Operations architecture in both Iraq and Vietnam. Additionally in Iraq, SOF built not only the Iraqi Military's SOF force but also contributed to development of the provincial Ministry of Interior SWAT forces. These are the FID in Combat roles that SOF is uniquely suited for and where they are most effectively utilized.

Conclusion

As this section ends, it is appropriate to highlight several tenants from within the advisory triad which apply to SOF. First, SOF in a large-scale counterinsurgency campaign works more effectively when partnered with host nation SOF or equivalents. In Vietnam, this was the Vietnamese Special Forces and other commando/strike forces such Civil Irregular Defense Force Strike Forces or MIKE Forces. In Iraq this relationship took the form of the Iraqi Special Operations Force Brigade and Iraqi SWAT.

Secondly, these partnerships are enduring and habitual. The relationship with Vietnamese Special Forces lasted for nearly 10 years; the relationship with Iraqi SOF is nearing

⁶³ This concept of evolution was something the author witnessed throughout four rotations with SOF in Iraq.

that mark, with projections to go further.⁶⁴ Enduring partnership was maintained by one or two US special Forces Groups (Brigade equivalent units) rotating in and out of these counterinsurgency campaigns. Many individuals, especially senior leaders, were habitually exposed to these partner units over the course of years of rotations; thus building a relationship that is unique to two foreign forces.

Third, SOF builds host nation SOF capacity in a counterinsurgency campaign for several reasons. There is the long-term goal of building host nation SOF capacity in order to stabilize the country, but it is also important to build a partner force to more effectively go on the offensive and fight the current threat. In both Vietnam and Iraq, SOF worked for the tactical command, not the advisory command. The tactical command expects SOF to take it forces on the offensive. Effectively fighting the current threat gives rise to a partnered relationship in which US SOF strength and partnered force strength are combined for greatest effect. An example of the concept would be SOFs ability to harness technology such as unmanned aerial vehicles combined with a host nation forces' innate knowledge of the people and cultural landscape. This combination is extremely effective.

A fourth point that comes out in both vignettes is that the SOF relationship with these units is more than advisory. SOF exerts influence over its partner force in numerous and creative means: through equipping, selection or even financing.

Although the SOF advisory role seems straight forward and effective, there are challenges. These challenges can come in the form of misuse, such as SOF being directed to administer basic training to host nation recruits.⁶⁵ To be sure, SOF has the ability to do this job, but it is not the most effective use of SOF. Also, SOF can be overused becoming a victim of its

⁶⁴ Trombitas, Simeon G. interview on bloggersroundtable, July 2008, <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/bloggersroundtable/2008/07/24/interview-with-bg-simeon-trombitas-director-of-iraqi-counter-terrorism-force-transition-team> (accessed 9 March 2011)

⁶⁵ Wright and Reese, 441

own success. Once these host nation SOF forces are created, there is an unending appetite, both from the US command and the host nation government for expansion. This cycle can push SOF and host nation SOF forces to the breaking point. SOF also needs to stay within the bounds and intent of US Commanders. Working so closely with host nation forces can possibly cause an organization to lose track of US Commander's intent.⁶⁶

The efforts of SOF Advisory programs in Vietnam and Iraq were significant and focused on SOF counter parts. The next portion of the paper will focus on the program to improve Vietnam's and Iraq's massive conventional forces. This effort was crucial for the US in both the number and quality of advisors dedicated to the program (greater numerically than the SOF advisor programs). How this was accomplished is covered in the next portion.

The Tactical Advisor Role

The second, equally important leg of the triad is the tactical level advisor role in a large scale counterinsurgency campaign. In this paper, a tactical advisor is defined as a US military person or team advising a division level host nation military unit or a provincial chief/governor or below. These US Military personnel are General Purpose Forces, as opposed to Special Forces, and are generally the rank of Colonel and below. These advisors are not advisors by trade, they are generally infantry, or other combat arms branched officers or NCOs, sent with little to no advisory training, usually on a one-year tour, assigned to a security transition command with a mission of advising a host nation unit. The missions given these advisors varied, depending on the unit, the quality of the advisor, and the situation.

There are consistent themes that run through these advisors missions: improve the effectiveness of the host nation unit, act as the liaison to US Forces in order to provide situational

⁶⁶ The dynamic of overuse and the desire to create more is something witnessed by the author throughout several rotations in Iraq.

awareness, and be a conduit for the host nation units use of US enablers such as air power.⁶⁷

These concepts, and challenges to them, will be addressed in the following vignettes on the tactical advisor programs in the US war in Vietnam and Iraq.

The Tactical Advisor Program in Vietnam

There is a tendency for many Americans to think of the Vietnam War as the period between 1965 and 1968 which involved the heaviest employment of conventional military power. However, the US advisory effort in Vietnam was immense and was conducted over a longer period of time. In 1968, there were over 11,000 tactical level advisors in Vietnam.⁶⁸ Compared to the half million US Forces in Vietnam at the time, 11,000 advisors does not seem that significant until one analyzes the numbers and calculates that there are 8 US divisions worth of officers filling the tactical level advisory role.⁶⁹ This high officer requirement is normal in the tactical advisor role due to the experience and maturity required to conduct the mission. The large numbers of officers dedicated to this mission indicates how important it was. The question becomes how were all these individuals utilized and was it effective?

The Vietnam War began as an advisory mission. The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) was built by the US, in a US image to counter the conventional threat posed by North Vietnam.⁷⁰ The North Vietnamese threat was viewed similarly to the North and South Korean dynamic whose war had just ended in 1953. The Military Advisory Assistance Group Vietnam (MAAG-V) had been in South Vietnam since 1955. This was a very small group of around 350

⁶⁷ Robert D. Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007) 36

⁶⁸ Ramsey, 32

⁶⁹ Ramsey, 32

⁷⁰ Krepinevich, 21

personnel and was not significantly increased until the threat from communist guerrillas became more significant.⁷¹

Based on this threat, in 1961 Secretary of Defense McNamara authorized a significant increase in the size and role of the US advisory mission in South Vietnam. McNamara authorized tactical level advisors down to battalion level for nearly every RVNAF combat unit. To give perspective, the RVNAF had 4 Corps, 9 divisions, an airborne brigade, 3 separate brigades and 19 separate battalions; each had its own advisory team. There was also a Vietnamese Special Forces Group and 86 separate Ranger Companies being advised by US Special Forces. These tactical advisory teams consisted of a US Colonel advising a division, a US Major and two NCOs advising a brigade and a US Captain, First Lieutenant, and three NCOs advising a battalion.⁷² McNamara also authorized advisors to accompany these units on combat missions, which had previously been forbidden.

Due to this significant increase in commitment, McNamara sanctioned the creation of Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MACV) in February of 1962. In 1964 MAAGV was abolished as the advisory headquarters and all tactical level advisors fell under the command of MACV.⁷³

Although this was a tremendous commitment of advisory talent, the RVNAF did not have significant success against communist guerrillas. In 1965 there were a series of decisions that brought in large numbers of US combat forces, significantly altering the course of the war.⁷⁴ This change had significant effects on the tactical advisory role. MACV became a war fighting headquarters, less concerned with the development of the RVNAF and more concerned with the

⁷¹ Collins, 2

⁷² Ramsey, 32

⁷³ Cosmas, *MACV in the Years of Escalation*, 288

⁷⁴ Cosmas, *MACV in the Years of Escalation*, 227

destruction of North Vietnamese Army units and main force Vietcong units. MACV became so fixated on these goals that from 1965-1968 the RVNAF were left to focus on the role of pacification.⁷⁵ This meant the advisors were no longer the main effort. In March 1965, MACV noted that the tactical advisory effort had evolved from training, to tactical advice, to combat support. Advisor duties had increased to include “coordinating both artillery and helicopter and fixed-wing air support; acting as a conduit for intelligence; developing supply and support programs; improving communications between combat units and area commands; and providing special assistance in such areas as psychological warfare, civic action, and medical aid.”⁷⁶

From this reemphasis on pacification, came one of the biggest success stories of the tactical advisor program in Vietnam: the union of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program (CORDS) with MACV in 1967. Since 1961 military advisors had been at the provincial level. By 1966 all 44 provinces in South Vietnam were apportioned MACV advisors. The genius of the CORDS program was that it brought together civil and military efforts at the Provincial level. The deputy commander for the CORDS program, under the MACV commander, was the US Ambassador. This civil-military unity put more effort on pacification at the local level and was successful in several areas.⁷⁷ The most significant result, concerning the role of the tactical advisor, was the increased effectiveness of the Regional Forces/Popular Forces (RF/PF). These forces were the equivalent of the Provincial Chief’s (usually a high-ranking Vietnamese Officer) village guard. Prior to the CORDS program very little emphasis had been placed on these RF/PF forces, which afterwards, began to rival, and in some instances outperform, the RVNAF.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Ramsey, 29

⁷⁶ Ramsey, 35

⁷⁷ Cosmas, *MACV in the Years of Escalation*, 363

⁷⁸ Ramsey, 31

After 1968, RVNAF units began to shoulder more of the combat and became more effective in certain areas. Indications from the operations in Cambodia in 1970 were good; many RVNAF units functioned well with or without US advisors.⁷⁹ By 1970 most US combat units had withdrawn from Vietnam and only advisors remained. The structure of the advisory teams did not change, but the mission changed from advising to combat support coordination. Until the US withdrawal in 1973, the coordination of US combat support assets and liaisons with adjacent US and RVNAF units continued as the major duties of the MACV unit advisors.⁸⁰

The best example of the tactical advisory effort late in the war was the stopping of the North Vietnamese Easter Offensive in the spring of 1972. The tactical advisors provided vital US air support that helped turn the tide against North Vietnam.⁸¹

Even with the large effort on the tactical advisor program it was ultimately the inability of the RVNAF to stop the 1975 invasion from North Vietnam that doomed the South.⁸² While the advisory effort was not perfect, it did much to build the RVNAF. The collapse of the Saigon government could be seen more in light of the effectiveness and determination of the North Vietnamese military as opposed to a failure of the advisory effort.

There were challenges at many levels in building an effective tactical advisory program. The first challenge was institutional, in that no Officer or NCO operating as a tactical level advisor was an advisor by trade. Even the parent headquarters, MACV was transitional and ad-hoc in nature, manned by personnel on one-year tours. A second institutional problem revolved around acquiring qualified officers to fill advisory missions and then providing the proper training. The officers needed to fill the advisor roles were the same officers needed to fill combat

⁷⁹ Ramsey, 31

⁸⁰ Ramsey, 36

⁸¹ Dale Andrade, *America's Last Vietnam Battle* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001) 1-8

⁸² Ramsey, 31

units. That demand for officers created a manning problem that became worse when combined with a perception that advisory duty was not career enhancing.⁸³ A third challenge was a shifting operational focus. In the early years there was a focus on building an army in the US image when the threat was insurgent in nature. This was followed by a period from 1965-1968 that was heavily committed to combat operations at the expense of the advisory mission. It was closed by a period where many scholars feel the focus was right, but too late.⁸⁴

In summary, the tactical advisory effort in Vietnam was an extraordinary effort requiring large numbers of officers and senior NCOs from the conventional army, as opposed to Special Forces. This advisory effort was focused mainly on the RVNAF but later also on civil military advisory effort in the form of the CORDS program and support to Regional Forces and Popular Forces. Vietnam began and ended as an advisory effort commanded by a transition assistance command, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. This effort was conducted on a massive scale, involving every Vietnamese combat battalion and higher. Its US personnel requirements were also massive, at one point consuming eight divisions' worth of US officers.⁸⁵

The following section examines the tactical advisor role in Iraq. The wars are different, but many of the roles and themes of the tactical advisor are very similar.

The Tactical Advisor in Iraq

The tactical advisor narrative in Iraq can be broken down into several phases. The first phase was the era of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and Combined Joint Task Force-7 (CJTF-7). The CPA was the US installed reconstruction government of Iraq while the Combined Joint Task force was the US military command in Iraq. This first phase of tactical advising was

⁸³ Ramsey, 38-39

⁸⁴ Ramsey, 30-31

⁸⁵ Ramsey, 32

purely improvisation, meaning there was no tactical advisor plan.⁸⁶ The next phase began with the creation of Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I) in the summer of 2004 and ended in 2009. This phase witnessed the evolution of the Military Transition Teams (MiTT) and Police Transition Teams (PiTT). Lastly, beginning in 2009, the tactical advisor became a part of the Advise and Assist enhanced Brigade.

The Tactical Advisor story in Iraq begins with CJTF-7 in the aftermath of the initial invasion. Although the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) had the responsibility for standing up the new Iraqi Army, there was an immediate realization at the tactical level, that some type of Iraqi force was necessary. There was an immediate understanding that the force development projection put forward by CPA of three divisions by 2006 was insufficient.⁸⁷

CJTF-7's answer to this problem was the development of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC). Each US division was initially authorized to develop a battalion sized paramilitary element and provide it with training, advisement, pay, and equipment. These ICDC forces were recruited from the local area (local to the US battle space owner), reported for duty daily, and returned to their homes at night. They performed duties such as static base security, trash pickup and other support functions. Their capabilities were limited and dependent on the amount of training and advisement given to them by their American sponsor unit. Tactical advisors at this time came from the sponsor unit with no training or special selection. The ICDC tactical advisors performed many of the same duties as would be familiar in Vietnam or later in Iraq. The only difference being the ICDC generally did not intentionally engage in offensive operations.⁸⁸

From the beginning of the ICDC there were unity of command issues. Their development was a point of contention with the US civilian leadership, which viewed itself as the capacity

⁸⁶ Cordseman, 24-25

⁸⁷ Ricardo S. Sanchez, *Wiser in Battle* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008) 213

⁸⁸ Wright and Reese, 441

builder in Iraq and saw the ICDC as straying outside of its intent. This was because the ICDC units were typically one ethnicity, as opposed to a multiethnic construct, which was the goal of the CPA. US military units could not meet that intent because ICDC units were locally recruited and it was extremely difficult to insure a mixing of ethnicities from within a local area.⁸⁹ There was a struggle between US civilian and military commands in regards to Iraqi Security Forces. The CPA took a very conservative approach to building the new security forces. Their vision included concepts such as a multi ethnic organization and no former regime elements (Baathists); a new image, not a recreation of the old. This utopian view was at odds with a US military that was engaged in a counterinsurgency campaign and needed every advantage, including more ISF, even at the cost of some sectarianism or resemblance of the old regime.

There were also issues with SOF and the ICDC on two additional points. CJTF-7 tasked SOF to deliver basic training to certain division's ICDC units. From a SOF perspective, this did not seem like the best use of forces within this large-scale counterinsurgency campaign.⁹⁰ The second point of contention with the ICDC program was that SOF trained and sponsored certain ICDC units and wanted to utilize them in the offense. At the time, there was resistance to this idea from conventional forces, but eventually SOF's ICDC units were enabled to take the offensive and by the end of 2004 had engaged in over 500 operations.⁹¹

In mid 2004 there were questions as to what would happen to the ICDC during the transition to the Interim Iraqi Government. The ICDC was generally seen as a poorly trained force with limited capability.⁹² However, in mid 2004 the ICDC numbers eventually grew to 60

⁸⁹ Wright and Reese, 440

⁹⁰ Wright and Reese, 440-441

⁹¹ Wright and Reese, 464

⁹² Wright and Reese, 465

plus battalions and by mid 2004 they were incorporated into the Iraqi Army and renamed the Iraqi National Guard.⁹³

At the same time, US leaders at all levels in Iraq were realizing that there was a significant need for tactical level advisors. This need was based on several factors. Initially, Iraqi units did not hold together well without US advisors, especially if they were in combat.⁹⁴ The second dynamic creating demand for tactical advisors was the significant increase in Iraqi military and paramilitary forces engaged in the counterinsurgency campaign. These units needed US tactical advisors for training, advising and providing US enablers. In addition, the advisor performed the liaison function between the Iraqi unit and the US battle space owner.

This increased demand for tactical advisors also created the demand for an improved method of training and acquiring tactical advisors. For the first year of the war, tactical advisors came from tactical units. There were also a few trainers working for the CPA who unexpectedly became tactical advisors when new Iraqi Army battalions were created. After 2005 the Military Transition Team (MiTT) and Police Transition Team (PiTT) concept was created. Each was a 10-15 man team selected by the Army's personnel system, designed to advise a battalion or a division sized unit, manned by senior NCOs and officers up to the rank of Colonel.⁹⁵ There were multiple tasks for the MiTT or PiTT depending on the period and the capability of the Iraqi unit. In general, the tasks involved were: training and advising, providing US enablers such as air power, providing liaisons with coalition forces and assessing Iraqi capabilities.⁹⁶ All of these tasks were similar to the tactical advisor of the Vietnam era.

⁹³ Wright and Reese, 465

⁹⁴ Wright and Reese, 449

⁹⁵ Wikipedia, Military Transition Team, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_transition_team (accessed on 29 March 2011)

⁹⁶ Jason, 29

As the demand for MiTT teams increased so did the need for their training. MNSTC-I created the Phoenix Academy in order to train advisors once they were in Iraq. This training generally lasted two weeks and covered the basics of advising Iraqis. In 2006 there were over 3,600 advisors in Iraq.⁹⁷ With this number growing, the 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley was tasked to develop a training program for MiTT team members going to Iraq. This training was more in-depth and was in addition to the training received in Iraq at the Phoenix Academy. These were positive steps towards adapting to the tactical advisor role, but these steps were reactive.

Once in Iraq and having attended MNSTC-I's Phoenix Academy, MiTT advisors were sent to the Iraqi unit they were to advise. Upon arriving at that Iraqi unit the team was directed by the coalition commander in the area. The team was also under the administrative control of the Iraqi Advisory Group under the US corps headquarters in Iraq. Due to these multiple command channels, this model did not adequately integrate the Transition Team with the battle space owner.⁹⁸ This integration was deemed essential for unity of command and effective operations. This issue of unity of command was a serious hindrance to the tactical advisor. If he did not integrate himself into the battle space owner's plan or the battle space owner did not integrate him then the tactical advisor could be marginalized. If the tactical advisor was marginalized he could not get support for his efforts, which manifested itself in an Iraqi unit that was not as well trained or employed as could have been. There are numerous firsthand accounts of tactical advisors in Iraq feeling like they were underappreciated, inadequately supported and at odds with the battle space owner.⁹⁹ In 2009 the Army implemented a significant change to address that issue with the tactical advisor program.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Peter Spiegel, "Army Training Advisors for Iraq," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 October 2006

⁹⁸ Greg Jaffe, "A Camp Divided," *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 June 2006

⁹⁹ Greg Jaffe, "A Camp Divided," *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 June 2006

¹⁰⁰ Brennan Cook, "Improving Security Force Assistance Capability in the Army's Advise and Assist Brigade" (Master's Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth 2011) 30

The Army addressed the shortcomings in its tactical advisor program by creating the enhanced Advise and Assist Brigade, which is augmented with transition team personnel prior to deployment. The advisors are assigned to the brigade and under the command of the brigade. The theory is that the unity of command fix will create a more unified approach to advising and therefore develop better partner units. It is too early to measure the effectiveness of this construct, but it demonstrates the Army's willingness to evolve in order to address shortcomings in its tactical advisor program.

As stated earlier, the tactical advisor effort in Iraq was put together in an improvisational fashion. Although much was accomplished, it is difficult to say how much better the situation could have been if the need for the tactical advisor role had been recognized sooner. This recognition would have led to earlier implementation of a tactical advisors program, one not based on improvisation. The recognition of the role of tactical advisors could have also reduced the marginalization of the tactical advisor because of a lack of integration with the battle space owner.¹⁰¹ These challenges were compounded by institutional issues such as the ad hoc nature of the tactical advisor program, cursory amounts of training, and a selection process that accepted nearly anyone in the right rank regardless of their potential to be an advisor.¹⁰²

To summarize this section on the role of the tactical advisor, there are several inferences to be made from the case studies. First, the role of the tactical advisor is critical in a large-scale counterinsurgency campaign. The tens of thousands of officers devoted to this mission during both campaigns demonstrate the criticality of this point. Secondly, the officers conducting this advisory effort were supplied out of the General Purpose Force population. In sheer manpower, the tactical advisor effort is larger than the SOF advisor effort. Thirdly, although the tactical

¹⁰¹ Nancy A. Youssef, "U.S. Military Advisors Say They are Treated as Misfits" *McClatchy Newspapers*, 22 July 2008

¹⁰² Ramsey, 38-40

advisor role evolves to where it is eventually seen as critical, it is sometimes marginalized and has difficulty integrating with US forces, especially during periods of intense combat. This was seen in the MACV focus on the conventional fight and the complete lack of foresight for the tactical advisor role in Vietnam. The fourth point is that the system used to produce tactical advisors was ad hoc. None of the tactical advisors were advisors by trade, some attended an advisor course, most elements were assembled in an impromptu fashion.

Three conclusions can be drawn when comparing tactical advisors in Iraq and Vietnam: first, both efforts demonstrate that this role is real and very necessary; second, both demonstrate that the Army is able to adapt and evolve to accomplish this mission. Finally; this impromptu approach to selecting, training, and prioritizing-- as if tactical advising was something new and unique to be relearned when it is encountered-- is costly in both time and effort.

So far the paper has discussed SOF advisory role and tactical advisors role. The next portion of the paper will discuss the institutional level of advising which many people do not consider, but it is arguably the most important leg of the advisory triad. Without this effort, other efforts may demonstrate limited success but will eventually fail if the host nation institution is not properly advised.

The Institutional Advisor Role

In addition to the Tactical Advisor Role and the Special Forces advising role, the Advisory Triad has an institutional leg. The institutional leg differs from the other two legs because it is not oriented toward the tactical, but toward the operational level. This leg resides at a security transition headquarters, which is generally the equivalent of a corps level command or higher. This command's responsibility is twofold: first, advising at the highest levels of the host nation and, secondly, developing and implementing some type of advisor unity of effort throughout the host nation. This command is predominately manned from General Purpose

forces. This is due to the requirement of numerous senior officers and the vastness of expertise needed at this level of advising.

The advisory mission consists of acting as liaison to, and advising of, the highest echelons of the host nation military in matters of force development, training, recruiting, retention, and strategy. This command is also responsible for synchronizing and guiding advisor activities with the host nation military or security force. It is important to note that synchronizing is different than commanding. In most cases, tactical advisors fall directly within the battle space owner's command. However, the institutional level of command acts as an advisor force provider, dictating advisor density, advisor training, and administrative support. This operational level organization is critical to the success of the advisory mission. It delivers focus, direction, and is able to inject itself into host nation issues at the highest levels. As will be noted in both cases from Vietnam and Iraq, this was a massive undertaking.

Prior to presenting the case studies it is important to differentiate between advising at the tactical level and the institutional level. Tactical level advising is focused on division level and below, most often in combat units. Institutional advising is not only focused on higher levels of command, it is focused on institutions that make a military run such as its training and educational base. All training may seem tactical. However collective unit, or basic training, for a host nation military is not the responsibility of the tactical advisor. That type of training is institutional.

Another distinction to make about the next two case studies is that institutional advising during Vietnam and Iraq were different from each other. Both tactical and SOF advising in Vietnam and Iraq were more similar and the previous case studies reflect the parallels. The institutional advising within Vietnam and Iraq took different paths. Vietnam began with a security transition command, which was later absorbed by a higher command. This failure of a headquarters to focus solely on the advisory mission was suboptimal. Iraq began with a civilian organization responsible for institutional advising. This organization failed miserably. However,

out of this failure was born a Security Transition Headquarters that grew and eventually became a model for institutional advising. In Vietnam, there was a devolution at the institutional level while in Iraq there was a positive evolution. The next sections will discuss the Vietnam and Iraq case studies which are unique, and provide greater insight into this level of command.

The Institutional Advisor Mission Vietnam

To begin the section on Vietnam it is appropriate to discuss the two different security transition commands that were established in the country and their functionality. Next, specific efforts undertaken at the institutional advisory level will be presented.

Military Assistance Advisory Group Vietnam (MAAGV) began as the institutional headquarters for the advisory mission in South Vietnam. This headquarters was solely focused on the institutional level of advising. In 1962, a higher headquarters was formed in Vietnam; Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MACV). MACV was created because of the buildup of US Forces and an increasing number of responsibilities beyond the advisor role. MACV was responsible for all US activities in Vietnam, including the advisory mission. From 1962 to 1964 MAAGV functioned as the advisory command under MACV. This arrangement was considered by many to be appropriate. However, in 1964, MAAGV was disestablished and MACV assumed direct responsibility for the advisory mission.¹⁰³ This disestablishment of the institutional level advisory command and its reestablishment under MACV was a step backwards on the advisory front in both advisory focus and unity of command.¹⁰⁴ The command's primary concern evolved into conducting conventional battles with the North Vietnamese Army and Vietcong.¹⁰⁵ This focus on conventional battle grew at the expense of the institutional advisory mission. After 1964, no staff section or commander possessed the sole responsibility for institutional advising. Each

¹⁰³ Cosmas, *MACV in the Years of Escalation*, 288

¹⁰⁴ Cosmas, *MACV in the Years of Escalation*, 288

¹⁰⁵ Krepinevich, 164-165

section had a piece of the advisor mission and a piece of the war fighting mission, which led to this lack of focus.

As stated above, MACV was not the optimal security transition headquarters. However, there was a significant institutional level advising effort that took place in Vietnam. This undertaking took the form of (1) senior level planning and advising, (2) synchronization of advisor efforts in the field, (3) Vietnamese training and education programs and (4) Vietnamese force development. Each of these areas will be discussed below.

To begin the discussion, it is appropriate to understand how the MACV commander saw himself and his staff in relation to advising the South Vietnamese Staff. The commander of MACV from 1964 to 1968 was General William C. Westmoreland. He saw himself as the senior advisor in country and he met weekly to biweekly with his counterpart.¹⁰⁶ The MACV staff also had a responsibility to advise and monitor their counterparts on the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, the MACV staff also formulated annual combined campaign plans from 1966-1968 with the Vietnamese Joint General Staff. This planning coordination was seen more as form rather than function because the Americans laid out the plan, and then passed it to the Vietnamese for comment. This was done for reasons of security and the perceived lack of competence of the Vietnamese forces.¹⁰⁸ It is important to remember that MACV was not a combined US Vietnamese headquarters where Americans and Vietnamese were integrated.

Secondly, MACV was also responsible for developing and directing advisors in the field. As was pointed out in the Tactical Advisor section on Vietnam, there were a vast number of advisors and advisory commands. In 1965-1966 there were eight separate advisory detachments

¹⁰⁶ Cosmas, *MACV in the Years of Escalation*, 350

¹⁰⁷ Clarke, 54

¹⁰⁸ Cosmas, *MACV in the Years of Escalation*, 351

and eight other service and geographic corps commands with advisor functions.¹⁰⁹ The responsibility for the advisory program also encompassed integration of Mobile Training Teams that entered Vietnam on a regular, but temporary basis. Synchronizing these efforts was a serious undertaking.

Thirdly, much of the MACV institutional level advisory effort went into building the South Vietnamese Army.¹¹⁰ MACV advisors coordinated with counterparts and developed policy on how and where to train new recruits, training of replacements, leader training, and unit training. An example of a unit training program conducted at a collective level was a plan developed and executed to train South Vietnamese Regiments by rotating them through national training centers.¹¹¹ By 1970 there were 33 such national training centers staffed by American advisors.¹¹² The South Vietnamese Military school system was another entity supervised and implemented by MACV. By 1970 there were 25 military schools, including military academies and a National Defense College.¹¹³ Institutional level advisors dealt with the force size of the Vietnamese military. As the military situation in Vietnam became worse, decisions were made by MACV and Vietnamese government to increase force size. Numerous studies were conducted by MACV on this topic. Some of the most difficult decisions revolved around whether to use the Vietnamese manpower increases to create more South Vietnamese infantry units or to build more Regional Forces/Popular Forces.¹¹⁴ All of these efforts were under the purview of MACV institutional advisors.

¹⁰⁹ Clarke, 56

¹¹⁰ Collins, 103

¹¹¹ John H. Cushman, *Senior Officer Debrief*, (Army Regulation 1-26, Memorandum to subordinate commanders 1972) 35

¹¹² Cushman, 123

¹¹³ Cushman, 127

¹¹⁴ Cushman, 66

Finally, a subset of the Vietnamese manpower issue that occupied tremendous amounts of MACV effort was the high level of Vietnamese desertion and how to stop it. Studies were conducted and recommendations were continually made to Vietnamese counterparts. MACV was able to influence the South Vietnamese Military to make changes that addressed the desertion issue, but never, throughout the course of the war, were they ever able to completely stop the problem. The underlying issues that MACV addressed through their Vietnamese counterparts revolved around poor pay, leave policies, uneven promotions, and even veteran's affairs. The South Vietnamese were receptive to MACV advisors suggestions, but problems remained. As demonstrated by this example, the institutional level of advising can be vast and all encompassing.¹¹⁵

Although much was accomplished, there was a major flaw at the institutional advising level in Vietnam: the lack of unity of command of the advisor program within MACV. At the highest level, the MACV Commander and his deputies had good interaction with their Vietnamese counterparts and there seemed to be few issues. Below that level, there was a myriad of staff sections responsible for different advisory and training programs, with no single entity or command that handled the entire role.

This lack of a functional operational level advisory command was the subject of two separate initiatives. One was directed by the Secretary of Defense and the other was mandated by the Johnson Administration. Both found the senior level management of the advisory function to be lacking.¹¹⁶ There were minor changes made, but as pointed out by Graham Cosmas in his official history of MACV "... at the beginning of 1968, four years after the abolition of the MAAG, Westmoreland's headquarters still lacked a single advisory organization capable of

¹¹⁵ Cushman, 60

¹¹⁶ Cosmas, *MACV in the Years of Escalation*, 288-290

bringing to bear unified, effective American influence for reform and modernization of the South Vietnamese armed forces”.¹¹⁷

As the withdrawal of US Forces continued through 1969, the problems of the South Vietnamese military, even though doubled in size, remained the same as they did in 1965: poor leadership, corruption, low morale, and a high desertion rate.¹¹⁸ General Clayton Abrams, the new MACV Commander, changed the focus of the conflict by emphasizing Vietnamese forces, but he did not change MACV’s advisory structure. As the US force structure drew down, MACV was mainly making decisions about how to apply fewer field advisors to a still shaky South Vietnamese Army.¹¹⁹

In summary, the institutional advisory experience evolved in Vietnam. In the earliest phases of US involvement in Vietnam there was an organization, MAAGV, which was responsible for the institutional advisory functions. In 1964, MAAGV was disestablished and MACV took over all advisory roles while simultaneously focusing on fighting a conventional war. There was a lack of emphasis from MACV on the advisory mission and the effort was noted as unsatisfactory from the highest levels of Washington.¹²⁰ During the US withdrawal phase beginning around 1969, the organizational structure did not change, but emphasis was placed back on the advisory program, but possibly too late.

When considering roles of the institutional advisory leg of the Triad, Vietnam demonstrates the complexity and enormity of the task at hand. US Advisors built the South Vietnamese Military and they did not stop working to improve it until 1973. This effort involved advising on every aspect of manpower from recruiting, to desertion, to veterans affairs. MACV

¹¹⁷ Cosmas, *MACV in the Years of Escalation*, 290

¹¹⁸ Clarke, 371

¹¹⁹ Clarke, 368-369

¹²⁰ Cosmas, *MACV in the Years of Escalation*, 288-290

and MAAG were involved in every facet of individual training, collective training and military education. All of these tasks were interwoven with advising the highest levels of the South Vietnamese military on strategy and any other disciplines. This institutional advisory function is often not considered when individuals think about advising. This may be because advising brings to mind someone teaching another force about weapons or tactics. Institutional advisors are more similar to corporate consultants. In a large-scale counterinsurgency campaign this line of operation is just as important as the other legs.¹²¹

Institutional Advising in Iraq

Institutional advising in Iraq and Vietnam were similar; both were enormous undertakings of vast scope. There are differences in the sequencing of how events unfolded, but the endpoint, with its emphasis on host nation forces and institutions was the same. For the purpose of this paper, the Iraqi institutional advising case study is broken down in two chronological portions and focuses on security transition organizations and their efforts. The first portion deals with approximately the first year of the conflict, from March 2003 to June 2004, over which the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was responsible for both governance of Iraq and the development of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). This portion is considered to be a lost year in most areas including the institutional advisory effort.¹²² The second portion began in the summer of 2004 with the seating of the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) and the creation of Multinational Security Transition Corps-Iraq (MNSTC-I) which was charged with the responsibility for the development of Iraqi Security Forces. The creation of MNSTC-I demonstrated a positive evolution towards what a security transition command should be.

When the war in Iraq began in 2003, few US military officers believed they would end up training, advising or building an Iraqi security force of more than half a million men, but that is

¹²¹ Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005) 276

¹²² Wright and Reese, 475-476

exactly what happened.¹²³ The assumption was that the Iraqi regime security apparatus would remain functional and provide order. This assumption failed to materialize and the Iraqi military and police quickly disintegrated and ceased to exist as functioning organizations soon after the US intervention.¹²⁴ To some degree, this disintegration was made worse by the CPA's decision to disband the Iraqi Army in May of 2003, although many argue the force had ceased to exist by then.¹²⁵

The first US organization that had responsibility for rebuilding the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) was the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) under Paul Bremer.¹²⁶ Although the Combined Joint Task Force-7 (CJTF-7) was the military lead in Iraq at the time, the CPA was responsible for the development of host nation security forces. This ownership caused friction between the CPA and CJTF-7. There was never agreement between the two organizations in regards to the Iraqi Security Force mission, size, training and capability.¹²⁷

In a break from the Vietnam case study, the CPA saw the immediate need for a better Iraqi Police Force. Between May of 2003 and March 2004, the CPA broke down their training elements into two separate commands: Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT) and Coalition Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT). The commander of CMATT was Major General Paul Eaton and the former New York City Police Chief, Bernard Kerik, led the CPATT.¹²⁸

CMATT was mandated to build the new Iraqi Armed Forces. The CMATT vision was to break from the past regarding the mission of Iraqi Security Forces. They wanted to insure that the

¹²³ Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, 124

¹²⁴ Cordesman, 10-11

¹²⁵ Diamond, 39-40

¹²⁶ Wright and Reese, 427

¹²⁷ Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, 132

¹²⁸ Wright and Reese, 430

Iraqi Army would be a defensive force, not involved in internal security matters, and pose no threat to neighboring countries. This meant that the Iraqi Army had to be relatively small--three divisions comprised of 27 battalions. The initial projection from the CPA was that these divisions would be complete in September 2006.¹²⁹

A number of issues hampered CMATT; Major General Eaton claimed there was a serious lack of emphasis on the matter. In an interview on that subject he stated "...there was zero thought on what the Army could do to develop security forces-zero."¹³⁰ Additionally, in June of 2003 CMATT had a small staff of 18 and was dependent on contractors and a few volunteers from US and Coalition forces in order to provide rudimentary training to new Iraqi Army recruits. As 2003 progressed and the insurgency developed, building of the new ISF became much more important to all parties concerned. The timeline for building the three divisions of the new Iraqi Army moved from 2006 to 2004.¹³¹ Major General Eaton's staff had grown from six in 2003 to over 200 by January 2004. The initial four and a half year stand-up timeline and the subsequent five-fold increase in Eaton's staff demonstrated a lack foresight, understanding, and dedication to, an institutional advising effort.

Although this effort to build Iraqi Security Forces had grown, it was still unstable. Many of the units produced by CMATT collapsed once they moved from training to independent operations. This disintegration was attributed to poor Iraqi leadership. It was not until 2004 that CMATT and CJTF-7 elements realized that US advisors had to augment Iraqi units if those units were to survive.¹³² Had these US organizations understood the importance of institutional advising, the growth of ISF would have come more quickly and predictably. The use of field

¹²⁹ Wright and Reese, 433

¹³⁰ Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, 124

¹³¹ Wright and Reese, 441

¹³² Wright and Reese, 447

advisors was initially done on an intermittent basis and later institutionalized under Multi National Security Transition Corp-Iraq (MNSTC-I). The greatest disappointment with early capacity building in Iraq came in April of 2004 when the hastily trained 2nd Battalion of the New Iraqi Army was preparing to fight in Fallujah. This Iraqi battalion was produced by CMATT and was the most prepared Iraqi unit available, but refused to fight before it ever reached the Fallujah.¹³³

On a similar front, the institutional effort led by CPATT advising Iraqi Police was a solid concept but equally problematic. Compared to the Iraqi Military, the police mission was more challenging due to the legacy of poor police forces in Iraq. Historically, the Iraqi military was a more respected force than the Iraqi police. This lack of respect within the Iraqi community manifested itself in difficulty recruiting police, especially police leadership. The mission of CPATT was to advise, train and build Iraqi Police forces utilizing international police volunteers. Usually these volunteers were retired police officers from various countries. The unstable security situation in Iraq in 2003/2004 did not allow for this type of advisor relationship.¹³⁴ It became evident that retired police officers could not safely work at Iraqi police stations away from US troop support. CJTF-7 Commander, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, considered CPATT “a waste of time and effort”.¹³⁵

During the summer of 2004 significant changes took place in Iraq that positively affected the institutional advisor effort. In July of 2004 the CPA ceded authority to the Interim Iraqi Government (IIG). With this act, CJTF-7 was also replaced by Multi-National Forces-Iraq as the lead military organization in country. Shortly thereafter, Multinational Security Transition Corps-Iraq (MNSTC-I) was created. This model security transition command took responsibility for the

¹³³ Wright and Reese, 449

¹³⁴ Cordesman, 20-21

¹³⁵ Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, 126

development of all Iraqi Security Forces. This organization moved towards solving the unity of command issue that had previously plagued the institutional advisor role. Lieutenant General David Petraeus commanded MNSTC-I and vastly expanded the number of personnel within his organization. This expansion demonstrated his understanding of the enormity of the task at hand: the building of tactical units, the training and educational base, the recruiting system, the policies and systems and the national institutions of Iraq's entire security structure, while simultaneously fighting an insurgency.¹³⁶ These concepts are at the core of the institutional advisor role.

MNSTC-I, as a new organization, brought a new vision to the campaign in Iraq. One of the major changes put forward by MNSTC-I was that the Iraqi Army should be involved in fighting the insurgency; this was not the CPA vision.¹³⁷ MNSTC-I also began to grow the Iraqi Army, incorporating the Iraqi National Guard into the regular Army and developing standards for how coalition forces interacted with Iraqi counterparts. For example, Iraqi soldiers could be used solely for checkpoint security or missions deemed unworthy of coalition forces.¹³⁸ MNSTC-I also began to improve and enhance the institutional portion of the Iraqi army. A small Iraqi joint staff had been established by CMATT, but MNSTC-I began to focus on this staff's development.¹³⁹ The US Embassy Staff advised the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior, MNSTC-I worked diligently to insure all efforts with these advisors were nested.¹⁴⁰

Schools and training bases also became a focus. By the end of 2005 a standardized basic training regime was developed at Kirkush training base. All Iraqi recruits received eight weeks of consistent initial training. As in Vietnam, this training was supervised by MNSTC-I advisors. The Iraqi Military Academy went from a three-month program to a one-year program based on a

¹³⁶ Wright and Reese, 452

¹³⁷ Wright and Reese, 453

¹³⁸ Wright and Reese, 451

¹³⁹ Cordesman, 182

¹⁴⁰ Wright and Reese, 453

British military academy model.¹⁴¹ The Iraqi Army was also able to broaden its force structure in size and scope. It went from a purely infantry force to a combined arms force with the addition of armor, signal, and medical fields. MNSTC-I was also working with SOF in their development of the Iraqi Special Operations Force Brigade, bringing unique Iraqi capabilities to the counterinsurgency campaign.¹⁴²

MNSTC-I was not just responsible for the force development of the Iraq Army, it was also responsible for the development of the Iraqi Police. Because of the unstable security situation, there was more military involvement in police development. This created a more paramilitary feel to the Iraqi Police. The need to have police that could engage insurgents led to the development of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) Police Commando brigades, MOI Emergency Response Brigades, and various SWAT units. These paramilitary police forces, although not created in the image of a traditional US police force, were necessary to fight the insurgency and restore law and order.¹⁴³

As MNSTC-I enlarged its organization and incorporated more trainers and advisors it also utilized more support from allied nations. The NATO training mission in Iraq was leveraged through base utilization in NATO countries to train Iraqis.¹⁴⁴ Jordan was also utilized as a base for training ISF. A crucial element to this entire effort was MNSTC-I's push to increase the size and effectiveness of the entire US advisory effort in Iraq. This included efforts to augment its own staff with a reserve division and develop a permanent tactical advisor program for Iraqi units.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Wright and Reese, 464

¹⁴² Wright and Reese, 431

¹⁴³ Wright and Reese, 469

¹⁴⁴ Wright and Reese, 454-456

¹⁴⁵ Wright and Reese, 454-456

Although many advances were made by MNSTC-I there were still two major challenges. Rapid expansion of the ISF allowed sectarian elements to enter the force. Units which were once militia suddenly became representatives of the Iraqi government. Rather than projecting legitimacy, these organizations did exactly the opposite.¹⁴⁶ Also it was difficult to develop competent and incorruptible leadership, which was in short supply in Iraq after the war. Overall, MNSTC-I was a much better organization than CPA, but several years into the war Iraqi Security Forces were still struggling to maintain security in their country.¹⁴⁷

As America's commitment to Iraq decreased in 2010, MNSTC-I was disestablished and absorbed by the new US command in Iraq: US Forces-Iraq (USF-I). The functions of MNSTC-I are now carried out by the Deputy USF-I commander for Advising and Training.¹⁴⁸ It remains to be seen how successful this construct will be.

In summary, the institutional advisory effort in Iraq got off to a disastrous start.¹⁴⁹ The CPA was not up to the task of taking on the institutional advisor role. The CPA effort suffered from a flawed vision, lack of emphasis and a system which produced a product that did not stand up to the initial test of combat in April 2004. After a realization that building Iraqi capacity was an integral part of success, the plan changed for the better. After the formation of MNSTC-I, emphasis and vision begin to produce better institutional advising results. This emphasis came in the form of an improved plan, a consolidated advisory plan, more resources in the form of advisors and money. This was a tremendous effort and undertaking that could not have been accomplished without a significant cost of time and effort. Four years into the war most Iraqi Security Forces were still not capable of quelling the insurgency in their country. This was partly

¹⁴⁶ Diamond, 226-227

¹⁴⁷ Wright and Reese, 477

¹⁴⁸ United States Forces-Iraq, Press Release, Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq Cases its Colors <http://www.usf-iraq.com/news/press-releases/multi-national-security-transition-command-iraq-cases-its-colors> (accessed 29 March 2011)

¹⁴⁹ Wright and Reese, 475-477

due to shortcomings of Iraqi leadership, but it was also a failure to recognize the need for an institutional advisory program; a program that was not planned or resourced for, and generally executed through improvisation.¹⁵⁰

To summarize the institutional advisory role there are several concepts from the case studies to consider. The first is that in a large scale counterinsurgency campaign it is critical to have a security transition command. Although in both Iraq and Vietnam there were examples of bottom up advising that evolved without the a transition command it much better to have a plan and a vision that encompasses host nation security forces from top to bottom. Additionally, common to both case studies, is the vast scope this type of advising encompasses: building, schools, training, retention, recruiting, etc. Advisors at this level are similar to business consultants with their focus on force development, budgets, and strategy.¹⁵¹ Only within General Purposes Forces does this vast amount of experience exist, but in both case studies this role was at some point either subverted or disastrously placed under a civilian organization.

Without a strong institution level advising program, the SOF advisor role and the tactical advisor role are diminished. They may both succeed in the short run but without a strong institution behind them, both efforts will falter.

Conclusion

It is clear that that there are distinct roles that exist for SOF and General Purpose Forces within large-scale counterinsurgency campaigns. It is also clear that the framework of the Advisory Triad, discussed throughout this monograph, is an appropriate lens through which to view these roles. The next paragraphs will reacquaint the reader with these roles.

The first role discussed was SOF advising host nation counterparts such as host nation SOF or host nation commando forces. This role was clearly validated in Vietnam through SOF's

¹⁵⁰ Wright and Reese, 476

¹⁵¹ Diamond, 276

relationship with Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) Strike Forces and Vietnamese Special Forces. In Iraq, this role was demonstrated through SOF's relationship with the Iraqi Special Operations Force Brigade. This advisory role is uniquely suited to SOF for several reasons. Firstly, SOF's training has significant emphasis on advising indigenous forces and offensive operations. Secondly, SOF's ability to train host nation forces to a high level. Finally, the habitual relationship developed between SOF and a partner force is also unique. This habitual relationship is synergistic and designed to build capacity while simultaneously conducting offensive operations. This advisory role is where SOF is most beneficial to both the host nation and US efforts in a counterinsurgency campaign.

The next role discussed was the Tactical Advisor. This role was determined valid and necessary via the case studies that point out that this is a responsibility, which has been conducted by General Purpose Forces for decades. In Iraq and Vietnam, massive amounts of officer talent were resourced towards this mission. Nearly every South Vietnamese and Iraqi tactical unit from the battalion level and higher had a US Tactical Advisor Team attached to it conducting critical missions such as training, advising, and assessing host nation forces while providing US combat enablers and liaison to US forces. These tactical advising roles allowed host nation tactical forces to develop and to become more integrated into US planning and operations. Without tactical advisors fulfilling these roles, the US must be content to have less success in large-scale counterinsurgency campaigns.

The third Leg of the Advisory Triad is the Institutional Advising. This function is often forgotten when planners and leaders consider advisory functions but it is as important, if not more important, than other two advisory functions. The Institutional Advisory function is usually conducted by a security transition command such as Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I) or Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MACV). Advisors within these organizations are responsible for guiding and recommending the host nation on strategy, force development, military infrastructure development, individual and collective training, military

education, finance, recruiting and retention. This command is also generally responsible for synchronizing the majority of advisory efforts occurring within the host nation. This advisory function is necessary and without it, there may be progress on other fronts but without strong host nation institutions, chances of success in a large-scale counterinsurgency campaign decline significantly.

While these three advisory roles are separate and distinct, they interact and build upon each other. The security transition command must interact with both the tactical and SOF advisors. SOF and Tactical Advisors interact due to host nation forces force structures being intertwined. These roles are distinct but complimentary and without the above stated interaction, there is no unity of effort and little meaningful success.

As discussed the previous paragraphs, the Advisory Triad proves valid. The next section will examine outcomes of the incorrect applications of forces to their proper roles. The case studies repeatedly demonstrate this can lead to failure, especially in the early phases of counterinsurgency campaigns. The following three paragraphs highlight failures and misunderstandings within each of the advisory roles.

In Iraq, the tactical advisor role was not recognized as necessary by Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and under recognized by Combined Joint Task Force -7 (CJTF-7). It was only by watching the disintegration of Iraqi units that it became evident that tactical advisors were needed.¹⁵² In early phases of Vietnam, the role of the tactical advisor was recognized as relevant because the mission began as an advisory mission. However, during the period of heavy US conventional focus, the tactical advisor role was marginalized.¹⁵³ Because of this lack of recognition and understanding, other serious issues developed within the tactical advisory program. These issues plagued the Iraq and Vietnam experiences: a bias that advisor duty was not

¹⁵² Wright and Reese, 449

¹⁵³ Ramsey 28-29

career enhancing, which led to a program resourced via incentive, rather than a selection process.¹⁵⁴ These issues were compounded by improvisational development of tactical advisor programs exemplified by the lack of an adequate advisor training system. The tactical advisor programs accomplished much and finished strong in both conflicts; however, the question is how much more the program could have achieved if the tactical advisor role had been recognized and understood from the start.

There were similar failures at the institutional advisor level as well. In Iraq, the program was the responsibility of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which delivered disastrous results.¹⁵⁵ A lack of vision and unity of command led to a lost first year in the conflict.¹⁵⁶ Vietnam also suffered from security transition command issues. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) disestablished the existing security transition command, MAAGV. Thereafter, it lacked a unity of command within the institutional level of advising. Even pending serious questions from Washington D.C., this shortcoming was never rectified.¹⁵⁷ By the conclusion of both conflicts, there were functioning security transition commands. However, the question remains, could better results have been achieved if the roles had been recognized and understood earlier?

The SOF advisor role also suffered from a lack of recognition and misunderstanding. During the early parts of the war in Iraq CJTF-7 tasked SOF to deliver initial training to Iraqi Civil Defense Corps to be utilized by their conventional force sponsors. This use was based on a belief that SOF should do the majority of host nation force training. The role of SOF was also misunderstood when CJTF-7 attempted to limit the offensive operations conducted by SOF's

¹⁵⁴ Ramsey 33-35

¹⁵⁵ Wright and Reese, 475-476

¹⁵⁶ Wright and Reese, 475-476

¹⁵⁷ Cosmas, *MACV in the Years of Escalation*, 288-290

partner forces.¹⁵⁸ These misuses were corrected soon after, but again misunderstanding of roles and responsibility led to wasted time, squandered resources and misdirected effort.

The case studies point to a pattern of failing to recognize advisory roles. How can the military prevent this lack of recognition and incredible misunderstanding of advisory roles? It is the contention of this paper that continual awareness would alleviate a large portion of the problem. Teaching advisory roles, training for advisory roles and implementing structural change is vital. Each will be outlined below.

First, it is the author's belief that the first effort towards understanding these roles is officer and NCO education. If officers and NCOs do not know specific advisory roles exist, the military will be doomed to rediscover these roles while trying to wage the next counterinsurgency campaign. This education should include both history and theory, of which there are plenty of examples. Basic awareness of the fact that SOF is not the only force responsible for an advising role would go a long way towards averting future missteps. There is an argument to be made that there are already too many concepts to teach officers and NCOs; however, it is the contention of this paper that, since 1965, the US Army has had advisors advising in separate large-scale counterinsurgency campaigns for approximately 17 years.¹⁵⁹ Exposure to this concept should occur at earliest phases of officer and NCO education and should continue throughout the individual's career. This is a major occupation of the military and should be treated as such in military education. The current war college equivalent class, which the author is attending, has not included advising in the curriculum and has only minimally touched upon counterinsurgency.

Secondly, the military should emphasize these roles through training events. This would allow soldiers to be mentally acclimatized to the concept of advising. It is difficult to replicate a

¹⁵⁸ Wright and Reese, 440-441

¹⁵⁹ Vietnam (1965-1973), OIF (2003-2011), OEF (2001-2011)

large scale counterinsurgency campaign in a training environment but it is possible to create scenarios requiring advisors. These scenarios could familiarize the concept of advising to all forces. Ideally, this training would not just familiarize, but would make the role more accepted and even develop a more skilled advisor. This training could occur anywhere from home station to the Nation Training Centers.

A third way to address the issue is through force structure modification. The Army has evolved its force structure as a way to adapt to the advisory role. The Army's Advise and Assist Brigade is a great example of this. Some argue that once current large-scale counterinsurgency campaigns are complete, the Army will not need the Advise and Assist Brigade. If that happens, understanding of advisory roles will diminish and the Army will revert to practicing for conventional war, much like after Vietnam. The proponents of a more radical structural change believe the answer lies in building an indefinite advisory command or a functional area for officers that is advisor focused.¹⁶⁰ These concepts for structural change are beyond the scope of this paper, but they do point to the validity that a structural change may be part of the way to address advisory roles.

The greatest benefit the military could render itself is to understand there are advisory roles framed within the Advisory Triad that explain the most efficient use of both SOF and General Purpose Forces within large-scale counterinsurgency campaigns. The case studies from both Vietnam and Iraq make it clear that these roles are both distinct and valid. Additionally, the case studies confirm that advisory roles are oftentimes misunderstood, resulting in the role being completely ignored or an inappropriate force being assigned to it. This misunderstanding leads to wasted time and effort when the US cannot afford to lose either. One of the simplest ways to address this lack of understanding and purpose is through education and training. A background

¹⁶⁰ John A. Nagl, "Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for an Advisory Command" *Military Review* (September October 2008): 21-26.

and understanding of advisory roles and their importance is a far stronger course of action than years of improvised and reactive learning.

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